

CAUCASIA AND CENTRAL ASIA

escape from Baku to Communist-held Astrakhan and intended to take away with them all the contents of the Baku arsenal on thirteen ships. The dictators, some of whom were former Russian navy men, managed, however, to prevent the escape of the ships and of the Bolsheviks.* As a matter of fact, their main strength lay in the backing that they had among the navy and merchant marine personnel.

The Germans found themselves in Baku through a strange set of circumstances. As mentioned earlier, the German government had concluded an agreement with Soviet Russia concerning the control of Baku and the exploitation of oil resources there. Accordingly, a German military mission was dispatched via Astrakhan to Baku. No complications were expected by Moscow or Berlin, because both Astrakhan and Baku were, in July, 1918, Communist-dominated.

The Germans thus planned to take control of Baku before their Turkish allies could conquer the city. The mission embarked on a boat in Astrakhan toward the end of July. Neither the Germans nor the Astrakhan Bolshevik Committee were informed that on July 26 the Social Revolutionaries had overthrown the Bolshevik government in Baku. On August 4 the German mission arrived in Baku and stepped down confidently from the boat to the pier. To their amazement the Germans found that the city was no longer in the hands of their friends, and they were promptly put under lock and key.

Dunsterville proceeded without delay to organize the defense of the city against the approaching Turko-Tatar forces. The dictators had a few regiments of local inhabitants at their disposal, and these

had to co-operate with the British. Yet, instead of co-operation, Dunsterville found apathy, suspicion, or outright hostility on the part of the dicators. The Turks approached and gradually encircled the city. After a few engagements with the enemy Dunsterville came to the conclusion that, in view of the non-co-operative attitude of the

* To prevent any further attempts to escape, the twenty-six arrested commissars were later sent across the Caspian and handed over to the counterrevolutionary government of Ashkhabad. There, on orders of the government, all were shot on September so, 1918. The execution took place along the railway line between Pereval and Akhtcha-Kouym (V. Chaikin, *History of the Russian Revolution* [Moscow, 1922], vol. I, as quoted by Joseph Castagne¹, "Les Organizations sovif-tiques de la Russie musulmane," *Reyu\$ du monde musulman*, LI [1929], 109).